

Sandy Gellis - 39 Bond Street - New York, New York 10012 - 212 777-1106

Storefront for Art and Architecture
97 Kenmare Street
New York N.Y. 10012
212 431-5795

Dear Kyong and Shirin,

December 15, 1988

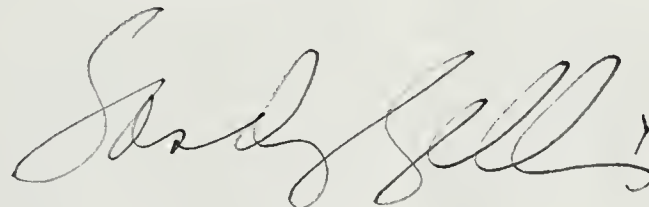
I'd love the opportunity to do an installation at Storefront.

Time will be needed to develop an idea although my concerns remain constant.
Natural Processes. The Environment. Intimate spaces in public settings.
A study of that which is not obvious.

I need to know what restrictions there are and what funding is available.
Perhaps an installation and a catalog of proposals. Or, an installation
and studies for it and others. Since I am scheduled to do an environment
at Petrosino Park (a.k.a. the kenmare triangle) to join the two in some
way would interest me alot. Interior and exterior triangles. It is
scheduled for September 6, thru December 3 1989.

Thank you for considering my work. If more materials or information ^{are} ~~is~~ needed
please contact me and I will be happy to supply them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sandy Gellis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Happy Holiday
and New Year

SANDY GELLIS: TIME AND WEATHER

COMING TO TERMS

Time and weather are really two sides of the same coin--the small change of the universe. To document this change as it occurs, and to see what happens when she tries to modulate it--these are the primary concerns of Sandy Gellis. At the conceptual base of most of her work is an ongoing exploration of the interaction of Art and Nature. The most general way in which I might define those upper-case terms as I use them here is that Art involves some deliberate and time-limited patterning of materials by a maker, while Nature implies the continuous setting in motion of organic entities (by a Maker, if we will). Art imposes and Nature imposes. Art impinges on Nature, Nature impinges on Art. Gellis intrudes herself between them, persistently, quietly, to observe and to let us observe the small interactions and minuscule happenings that result from a delicate balance between imposition and being controlled.

FIXING THE TEMPORAL: THE CHRONICLE

Clusters of pine needles are wrapped in cheesecloth, bound with twine, and brushed with melted paraffin which seeps in to seal all but the edges of the needles. Powdered bronze is rubbed onto the surface, embedding itself in the still warm paraffin. The general effect is of odd sheaves dipped in gold. There are thirty of these shapes, and viewers are appalled or enthralled, depending on what they see in them: underwater life, Bic Bananas, magnified amoebae, phallic symbols. Affixed to a wall, each so much like the other, and yet so different if one looks closely, they are suddenly seen as a diary or calendar, a succession of golden days marking a month spent in a new setting. The pine needles have been taken up from the forest each morning at random, as a morning might be, and yet they become the shape of an entire day, which solidifies wholly when it is over. But objects have always been gilded or bronzed to make them "permanent," from colossal statues to baby shoes. The difference here seems to lie in the ruminative, repetitive quality, which is concerned with the gesture far more than with the object. Sometimes the gesture is secret, having more to do with the maker than with the art. Why are some of these "days" thin, full, somewhat dull, or superbly golden? Are the days different because of events or people which marked them indelibly? Is there really a fixed order, although the days seem to be stationed at random?

This work is simply called "Pines-August, 1979," but each of the shapes bears a small number carved into the wax at its back and hidden from any viewer. There are many such privacies in Gellis' work--arcane, totally her own, and tremendously important to her.

WEATHER AND WEATHERING

Surely the philosophers who have written about creativity cannot be wrong when they say that one of the major impulses of the maker is to ward off death, in an attempt to insure a kind of immortality, if not for the artist, then at least for the work of art. Concern about permanence has been vital to painters and sculptors since the first stone was sharpened to engrave the walls of a cave. Glazes, fixatives, waxes, casting, firing--all ammunition in the historic battle to maintain color and form for the future. Indeed, the preservation of art as object--the frame, the glass, the scaffolding--is so basic a part of our conception of art that it seems almost simplistic to call attention to it. Even the avant-garde work of this century which deliberately breaks with this line of permanence owes its very effectiveness as throwaway or ephemera to the tradition it opposes. One of the most interesting features about Gellis' work is that she concerns herself neither with permanence nor with defying it. In fact, one of the main themes in her work is the chronicling of change. Weather implies continual change--the unexpected, albeit seasonal, variation in what is around us. It is not reliably predictable. It can astonish us. We cannot time it. Weathering, since it is the effect of time and weather in persistent relationship to any given, is even more subtle and obdurate in its resistance to accurate prediction. Water will wear away rock, copper will turn green, iron will rust, fungi and algae will grow. Science can document how and why some of this happens, but Gellis is concerned with facilitating its happening. By maintaining a climate in her art which sets time and weather into relationship with one another, by setting the processes of change before us in an environment she helps create, Gellis gives us the illusion of the ephemeral made permanent, the permanent made ephemeral.

INTRUSIONS, INSERTIONS

To what extent does Gellis want to predict outcomes? How much intention is involved in her work from the outset? By now, of course, she can anticipate, through an accumulation of experience with past pieces and materials, what salt and water and powdered metals will probably do. In the course of any

project, she will make changes in technique and materials, watering down, wearing down, building up, because of the goals that were part of her initial concept. But the essence of her work is that each piece lies in uncharted territory, that she cannot control it completely, that she must depend on chance in order to continue. In a process of ongoing modification and alteration, she reaches the end of a work (if there is one) much the way a poet reaches the end of a poem.

Four holes are dug in a New England field. Powdered metals, salt, wire, sections of birches and cheesecloth are all used to modulate these spaces, so they become outdoor sketches, ongoing sketches that one can watch. What happens around them in the course of time? What new colors and forms take hold? Why does powdered copper make the birch dark brown, and not the expected blue? Why do these areas remain green in the fall when the rest of the field has browned? Why are butterflies constantly drawn to one of the spaces? Why does rust so quickly encroach on another? And incidentally, one can enjoy a kind of metaphoric musing on the nature of the whole project as art object. No one, including the artist herself, can own this original Gellis. Not even the field owns it, for it is constantly in flux, becoming not what it was a moment before.

Plastic tubes with absorbent cotton in them are immersed at a pier in the Hudson River in October. Gellis watches over them for 16 weeks--but so does the river. When the tubes are removed, both ends are sealed, so that the formation of algae and fungi that the river has deposited is captured into its own environment. Gellis has created a microcosmic growth cycle, not to study the biological properties of the work, but to let us see the astonishing shades of bright yellow and pink that begin to appear within the tubes, the changes in composition and decomposition. How will the work be different when tubes are immersed at other seasons, with other modifications? Gellis has her hunches, of course, but she depends on the kindness of stranger forces as well.

SANDSCAPES, LANDSCAPES

Much of Gellis' art is hermetic and inward, a quiet and solitary meditation on her surroundings, but one recent project (still in progress) was very much involved with other people from its inception. The plan: At her request, participants send her samples of sand or soil from all parts of the world, with brief descriptions of where and when they were collected. These samples are

4

then enclosed in clear polyethylene bags (each 11½ by 10½ inches) with about 1½ liters of ordinary tap water. The sand settles to the bottom, the impurities (my concept, surely, and not Gellis') shift and sift and rearrange themselves, and the water takes on a multiplicity of coloring from the composition of the earth. In each of the clear envelopes, in time, a microcosmic world comes to be, with its special elements of earth, air, water, its miniature horizon, its settling down to its own uniqueness. Is the sand the earth, is the water the air, is the grit and pebble the mountain, is the sky the space at the top, is the plastic itself the atmosphere? The description of each ever-changing universe is typed on paper aligned on the wall in back of the plastic, so that the words themselves change their character behind the colors and patterns of each "frame." The samples of sand are from places as far as the Near East, as near as Far Rockaway. The descriptions range from sober utilitarian explanations, such as "Wales, Conwy. Northern coastal region. From a public garden near the ocean," to the humor of a composer who describes his sample of soil as follows: "Indiana, Muncie. About the dirt; it's from a very special spot in my garden. But beware! This soil is mighty powerful stuff. It's used by all the local animals as a lovemaking spot. Pigeons, cats, dogs, slugs, ants, bees, worms et al have been seen in the heat of a love-grip on the very spot where this dirt was taken. If you breathe its subtle, sensual odors too much, or hold it in your hand for too long, you will surely be overcome with an uncontrollable desire for sex. Please be careful."

Earthy stuff! But it is important to note here, as it is about much of Gellis' work, that the above levity is adventitious, and while it may amuse us, it is not related to the essence of Gellis' concept. Elements such as excitement, humor, playfulness, or satire, which one often looks for in conceptual work, are generally not in Gellis' art, nor is there anything political or didactic. It is not that they are missing or not realized. They simply have no part in what she is doing, and even that fact sets her work off by itself in an odd and sometimes compelling way and gives her projects a kind of special quality in the field of environmental art. Gellis is persistent, quiet, obsessive, bending her will and waiting, waiting. Yet she is continually making subtle attempts to alter the terrain of her explorations, to show that she was there, and to let us look on with her as she observes what happens when Art and Nature infuse each other.

In her show entitled *Earth, Air, and Water Studies* at Storefront for Art and Architecture (September 19–October 14), Sandy Gellis included drawings and models illustrating specific project proposals, sculptural artifacts, and a series of square brass plates with etched patterns (the records of rainfall on a particular day in the year). But Gellis's works are most successful in their approach and response to the environment. Her projects for New Lake and Curtis Bay, Maryland, are at once critical of our misuse of nature, protective of the environment, and act as reminders and memorials to that which is already lost.

On one side of Curtis Bay is a garbage dump, which, in the *Curtis Bay Project*, Gellis proposes to cover with black slag, creating a sculptural memorial whose shape and dimension would be determined by the extent of the damage done to the environment. Among the reeds that grow along the marshy shore opposite the envisioned mountain of slag would be a fence of parallel iron rods, preventing recreational use of the bay and allowing a return to ecological balance.

In the *New Lake Project*, Gellis proposes to protect Lake Rowland by putting a layer of transparent material three feet above ground level in the wooded area surrounding the lake, and by so doing, give the natural growth above and below the material time to recuperate.

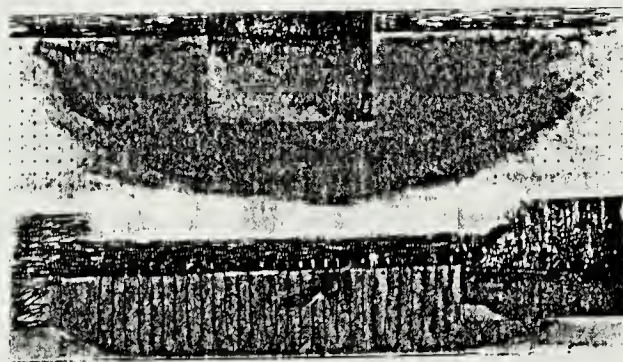
In Petrosino Park, a small triangular city-space kitty-corner to the gallery, Gellis installed *Wind Garden*. It was an installation that consisted of cotton cording and wind socks, and formed a non-confrontational, soft, site-specific sculpture, which changed every day as a result of its sensitivity to shifting wind conditions. The piece was destroyed (cut down and trashed, to be specific) by the New York City Sanitation Department, despite

signs that indicated it was a city-sponsored artwork, done in cooperation with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Gellis plans on painting the shadows of the piece in black, as a defiant and inviolable ghost of the original, to serve as a reminder of the problems of art in a public context. Is art indeed a rarified activity that cannot exist outside a white room unless it is made virtually indestructible?

Gretchen Faust
New York in Review

ARTS MAGAZINE

December 1989 Volume 64 No. 4



Sandy Gellis, *Implant*, 1983, Photograph, graphite, powdered pigment on paper, 43" x 75". Courtesy Storefront for Art and Architecture.

POSSIBILITIES FOR AN EXHIBITION AT STOREFRONT
FOR ART AND ARCHITECTURE THAT WILL COMBINE
WITH "WIND GARDEN" INSTALLATION AT THE
KENMARE TRIANGLE —

project #1 "Wind Garden"

Proposal for Petrosino Park (Kenmare triangle)
Model — A WORK IN PROGRESS
2-3 Drawings A WORK IN PROGRESS

enclosed is written preliminary
diagram

project #2 "Viewing Mounds"

8 photodrawings each 16" x 20"
3 idea drawings each 30" x 42"

photo documentation

THIS IS A LARGE PROJECT BEING
COMPLETED THIS JUNE (HOPEFULLY)
30 FT X 90 FT DIAGRAM enclosed.

project #3 "Charting an unknown Spring"

model and written proposal (enclosed is written material and poloroid of model)
A PROPOSAL NOT YET ACTUALIZED
slides for 6 large scale drawings (conceptual ideas for specific sites)
slides for 6 scale models

listing for slides enclosed

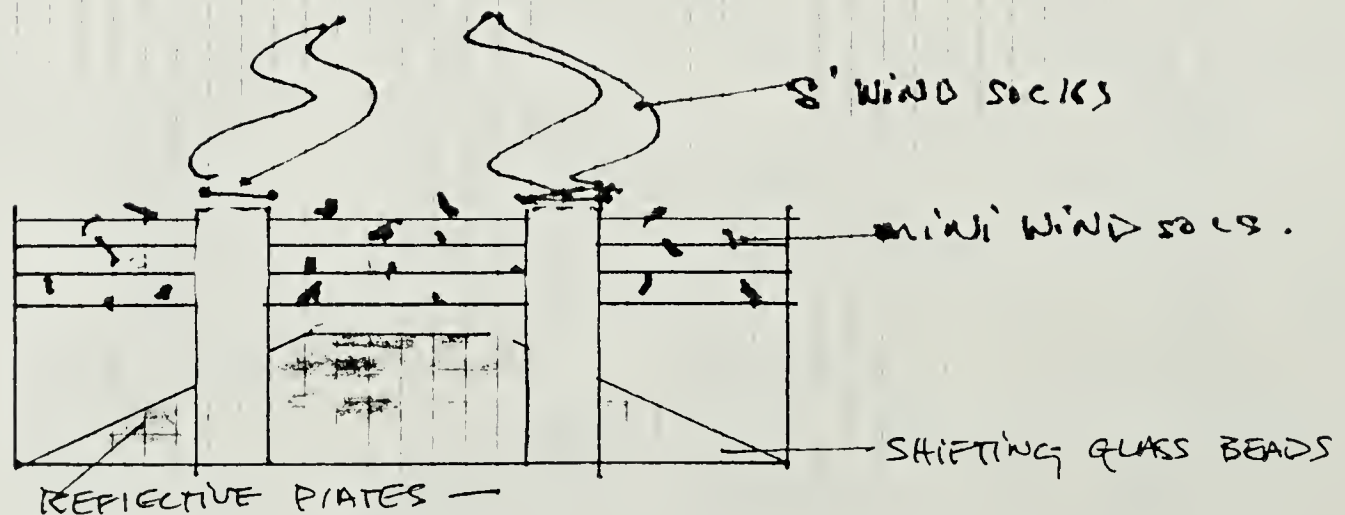
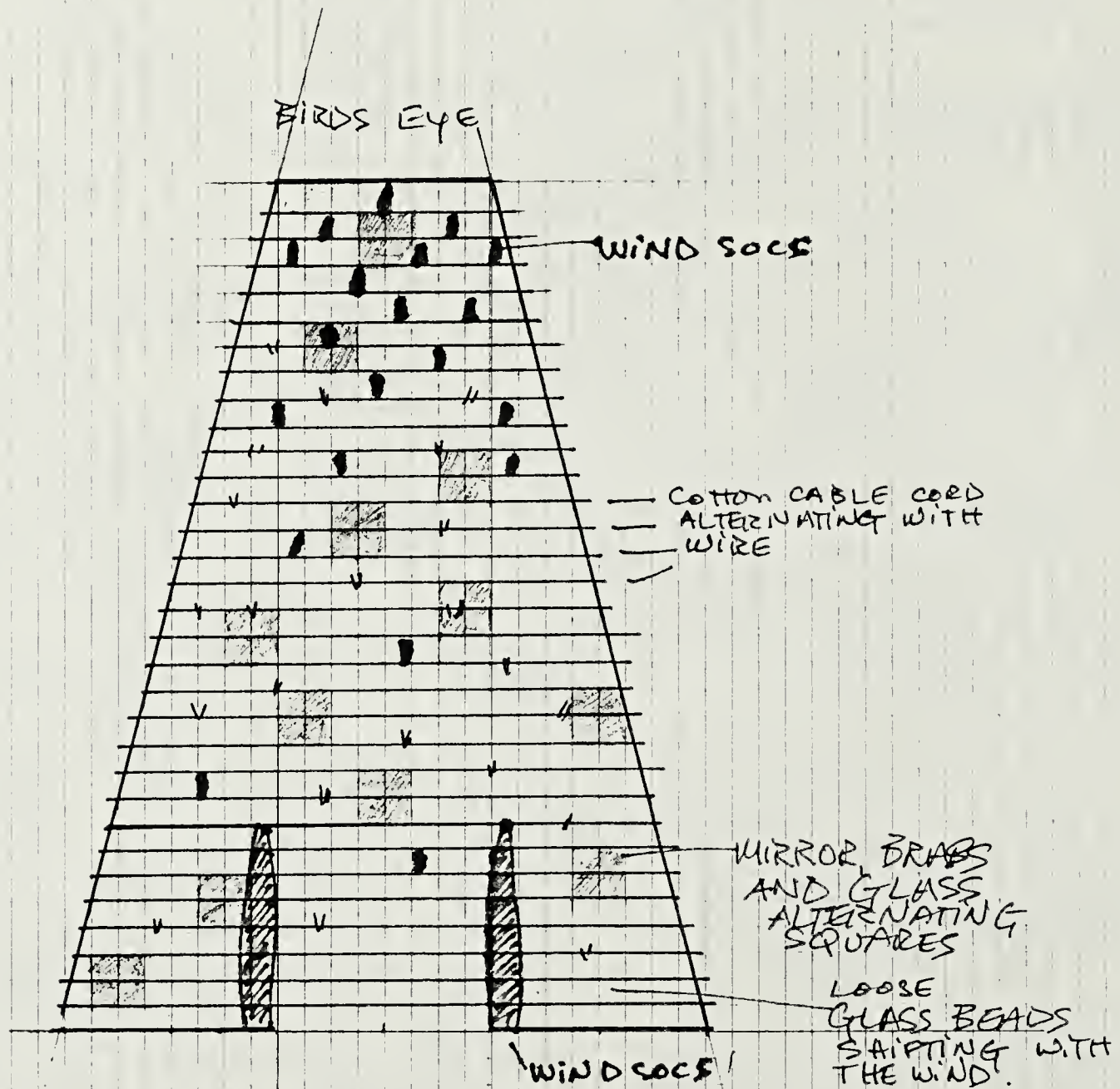
- | | | |
|---|------------------------|--|
| ✓ 1- 'Mound, Glass Walls, Iron Rods' | 4ft 49" x 44" 4ft | drawing-photo, graphite, pastel on paper |
| 2- 'Rain Channels' | 7ft 80" x 42" 4ft | drawing- photo, graphite pastel on paper |
| ✓ 3- 'Crawl Space' | 5 1/2 ft 64" x 34" 3ft | drawing- photo, graphite pastel on paper |
| ✓ 4- 'Implant' | 4ft 43" x 75" 6 1/2 ft | drawing- photo, graphite pastel on paper |
| 5- 'Time Vault' | 7ft 80" x 44" 4ft | drawing- photo, graphite pastel on paper |
| ✓ 6- 'Site: Curtess bay Maryland' | 4ft 43" x 80" 7ft | drawing- photo, graphite pastel on paper |
| 7- 'Time Wall' | 12" x 16" x 16" | scale model 1" = 1' wood, glass, steel and light |
| 8- 'Time Room' | 24" x 24" x 8+ | scale 1" = 1' glass, glass beads |
| ✓ 9- 'Glass Columns' | 24" x 27" x 10" | scale 1" = 4" iron, glass, cement |
| 9- 'Glass Walls' | 36" x 18" x 6" | scale 1" = 2' powdered iron, glass |
| 10- 'Mound, Glass Walls, Iron rods'
NO SLIDE | 47" x 38" x 7" | scale 1" = 1' glass, powdered iron, iron rods |
| 11- 'Rain Pool Room' | 18" x 18" x 12" | scale 1" = 1' glass rods, wood, wax |

MANY VARIATIONS ARE POSSIBLE DEPENDING ON WHAT WILL
WORK IN THE SPACE @ STOREFRONT —

Project #1

"WIND GARDEN"

Project Proposal; ~~CATCHING THE 4 WINDS.~~



SANDY GELLI'S '89

Viewing Mounds

Viewing Mounds is a series of 19 mounds, each having a 10 foot diameter and a 5 foot height that occupies a circular area 100 by 40 feet. Climbing each mound offers the viewer a slightly different perspective of their surroundings, which are, a southern view of Stissing Mountain and a western view across the Hudson Valley, of the Catskill Mountains. The piece is located in Ancramdale, New York, an area historically rich in 19th century iron mining.

The mounds were formed in October 1989 with a backhoe, trucked-in gravel and clay mixture. Settling ensued at a dramatic rate throughout the winter; those mounds facing south formed softened peaks, while those facing north retained their original peaks. In June 1990 the mounds were covered with four tons of powdered sponge iron, slowing the settling process. The spaces between the mounds or trails are coated with an additional 400 pounds of powdered iron. The configuration is as follows:

			6	8	6		
	2	4				4	2
1			8	10	8		1
	2	4				4	2
			6	8	6		

1 = 100 lbs of powdered sponge iron

Some of the mounds are occupied by either red or black ants that established themselves as residents during the winter. After the iron was placed, the ants bored holes through it, reinforcing the entrance to their tunnels. The mounds require abundant rain to oxidize the iron and solidify the structure, these holes help to moisten the iron below the surface and speed oxidation. These unplanned ant tunnels are an integral part of the mounds. As the Viewing Mounds age, the iron will continue to respond to moisture occurring naturally in the atmosphere.

Viewing Mounds is my most recent investigation of landscape, natural phenomena and change, that occur through time and exposure, with the addition of organic substances.

Sandy Gellis 1990

Dear Kong & Shinn
If you are ever
in the area please
stop by to see the project
just call
Best
Sandy



VIEWING MOUNDS

100' x 40' x 5'
POWDERED IRON, CLAY AND GRAVEL
STEPHEN FARMS, DINE RAINES NEW YORK

SANDY GELLI'S

1990

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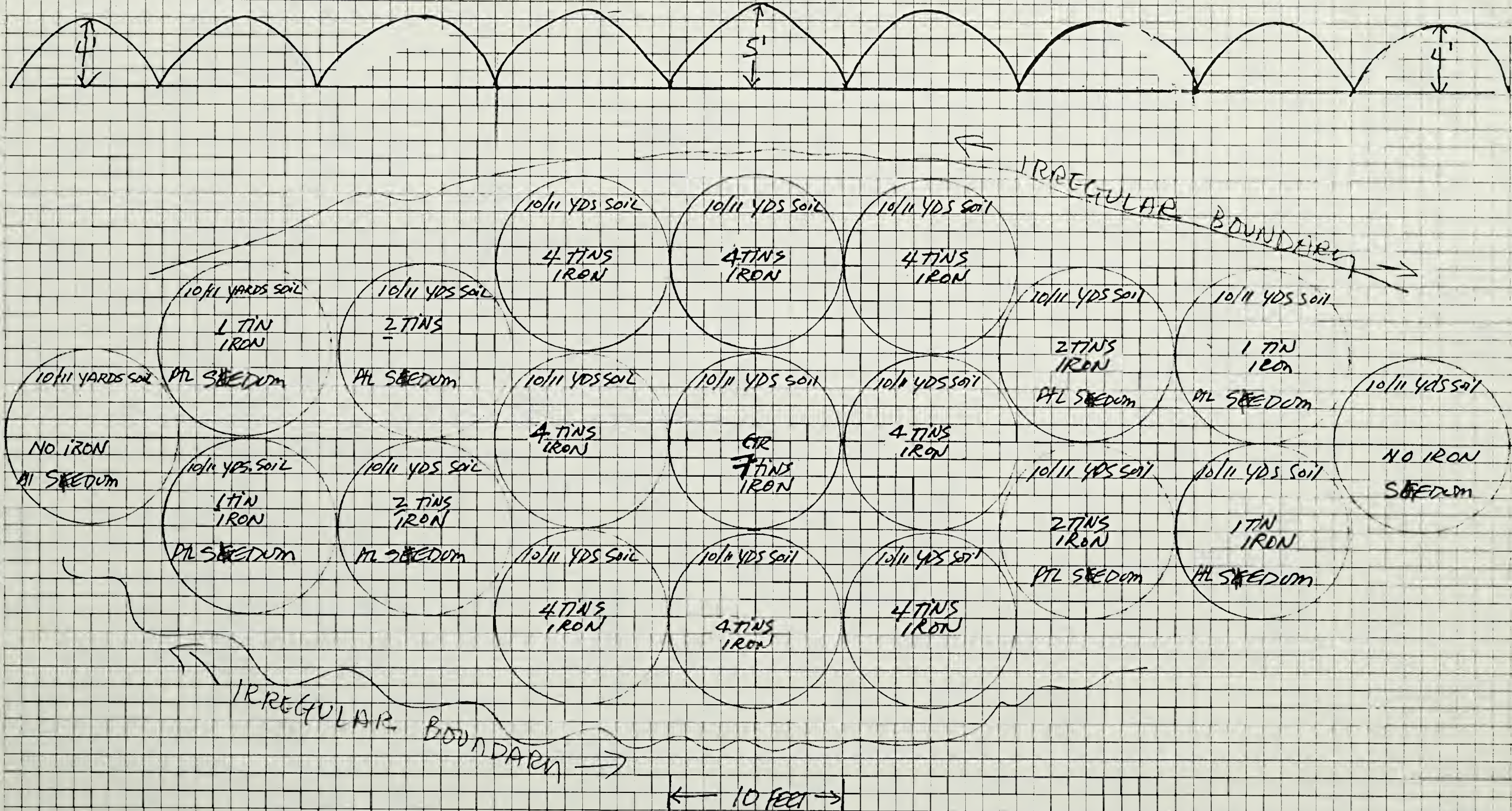
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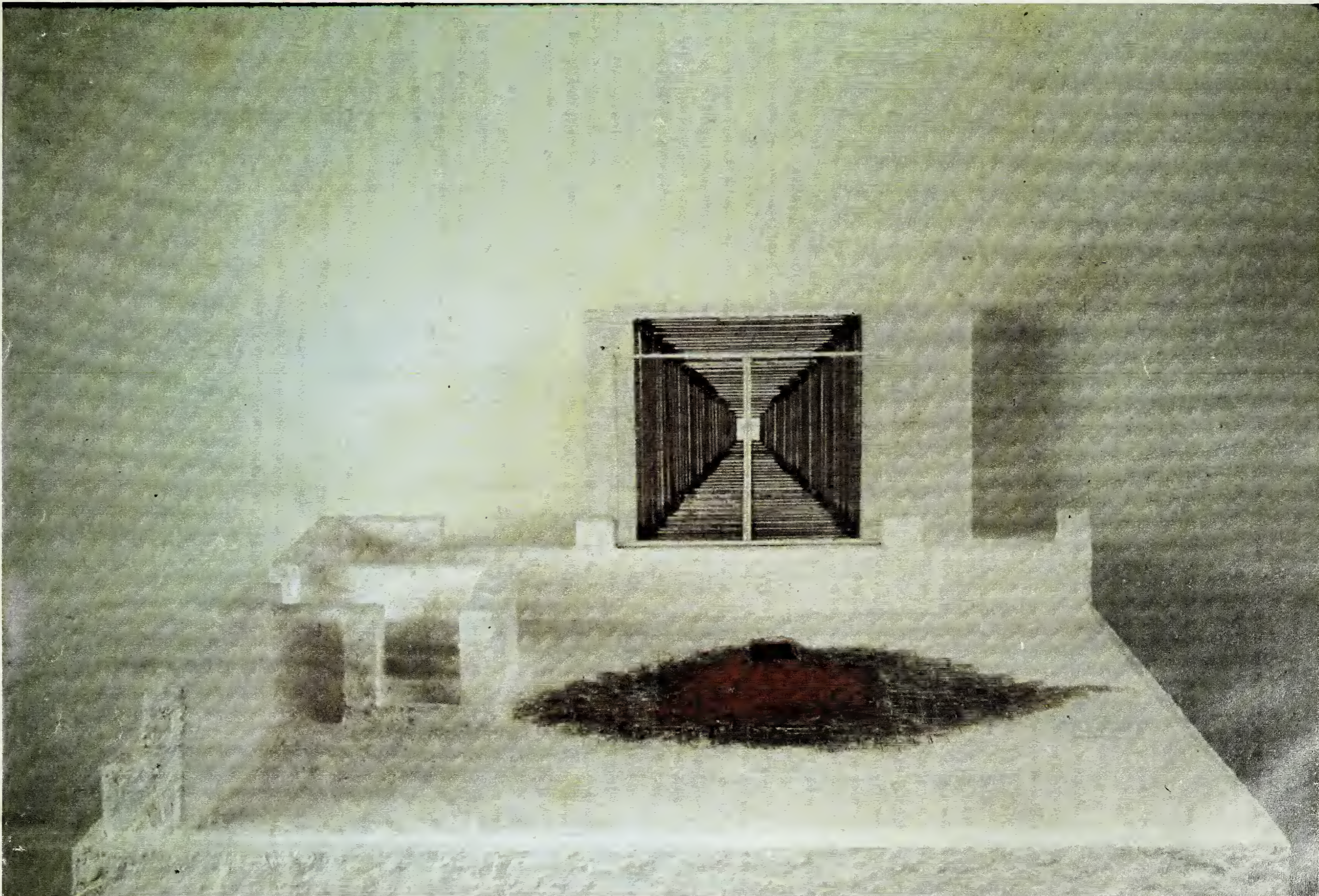
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Sandy Gellis 1990

PROJECT #2 "VIEWING MOUNDS"



SANDY GELLIS 7SPK
39 BOND ST
NYC 10012



CHARTING AN UNKNOWN SUBJECT

2011/11/15

1/15

Sandy Gellis – 39 Bond Street – New York, New York 10012

CHARTING AN UNKNOWN SPRING:

is a network of interior channels feeding an external fountain. There is a system of copper tubing in a 9 x 9 foot square mounted on an interior corridor wall. Within the courtyard is a cement copper mound with a central fountain also 9 x 9 ft. Brickwork surrounding the fountain will be patterned in the form of water vegetation.

Materials: Copper, Water, Cement and Glass
Model scale 1 inch = 1 foot

Project: CHARTING AN UNKNOWN SPRING

Project Site: New Brunswick New Jersey Rehabilitation Center of
the Blind and Visually Impaired

Sponsor: State of New Jersey & for Art

First Proposal: CHARTING AN UNKNOWN SPRING is a network of interior channels feeding an external fountain. There is a system of copper tubing in a nine foot by nine foot square area on an interior corridor wall that faces windows which look out on a courtyard. There are 33 copper tubes processed with gun blue which radiate from a central source. The tubes are engraved suggesting an imaginary tactile map tracing the water's flow. The contents of the pipes vary from water to air to solid metal which permits subtle differences of temperature, moisture and material to be experienced through touch and sight. The central pipe, one incoming and one outgoing, crosses the corridor and extends into the courtyard feeding a glass enclosed fountain. Within the courtyard the cement mound being created will be an area nine feet by nine feet square and eighteen inches high with a central fountain. The brickwork, cement and bitum already existing in this area will be repatterned to integrate the installation with the existing structures.

Materials: Copper/Brass, Water, Cement and Glass

SANDY GELLIS 1987

SANDY GELLIS 39 BOND STREET NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10012 212 777-1106

Project: "CHARTING AN UNKNOWN SPRING"

Materials: Copper/Brass, Water, Cement and Glass

Budget: \$30,000.00

Estimate Interior Section;

three 20 foot lengths of type "L" copper tubing $1\frac{1}{4}$ " o.d.	
	140.00
fifty four 20 foot lengths of type "L" copper tubing $\frac{1}{2}$ " o.d.	
	3060.00
132 brass elbows	113.00
66 T's $\frac{1}{2}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ " x $1\frac{1}{4}$ "	402.00
wall brackets 250	638.00
silver solder 5% @ 21.65 per pound	216.50
formula 44-40 gun blue 2 gallons	257.00
varnish and wax	125.00
acetaline, flux and assembly	1000.00
sub total	5951.50

Exterior Section

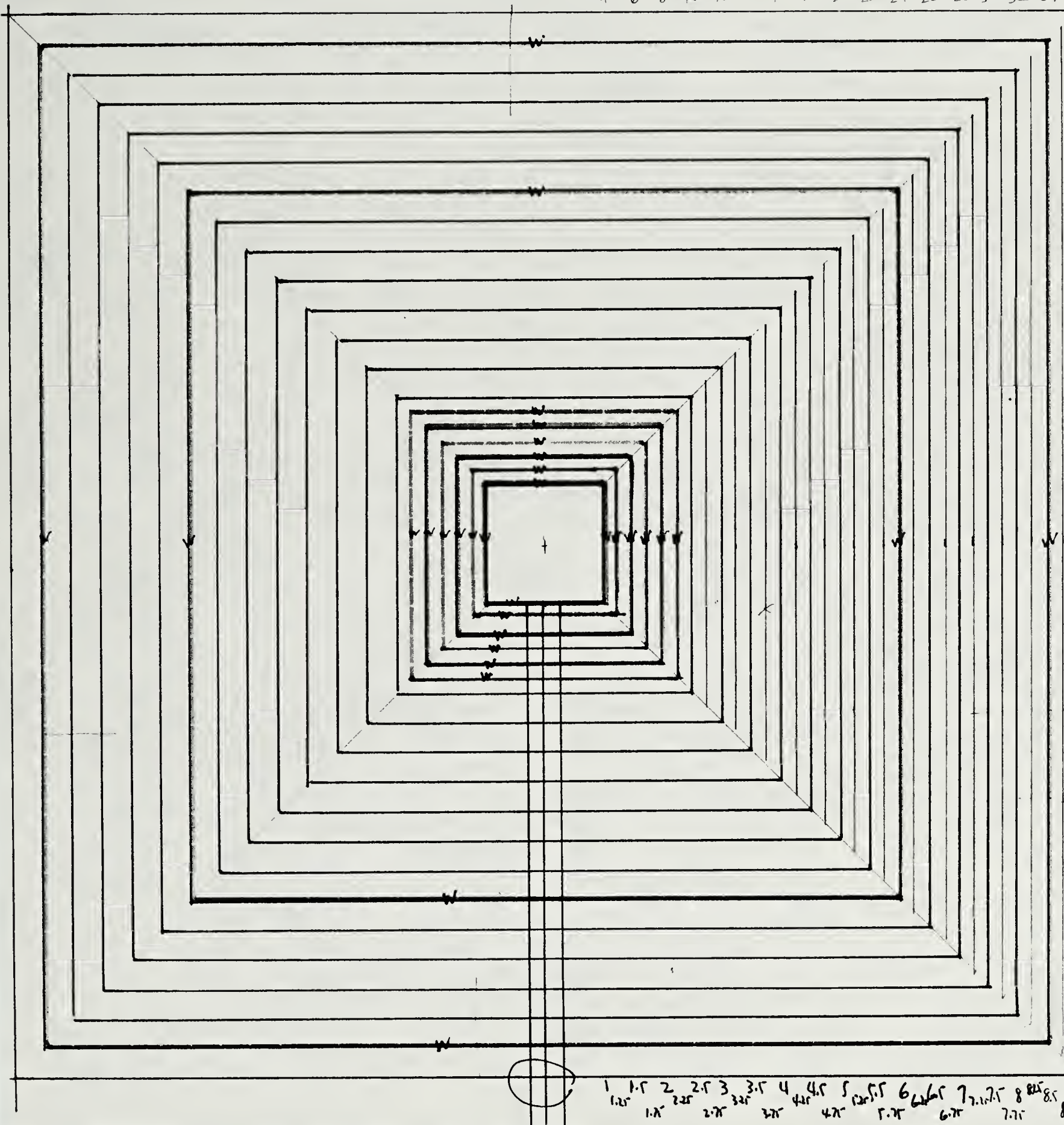
one half inch glass rectangle	
silicone seal with holes gaskets and clamps	
glass tank construction to include filler pipe	
cap and funnel	1500.00
pump	280.00
steel box construction to hold pump	550.00
electrical connection G.F.I. 115 volts	150.00
cement mound 9 feet by 9 feet by 18 inches	
wire mesh reinforcement, white pigment with	
powdered copper coating	1750.00
sub total	4230.00

Design and Installation

construction documents	750.00
design fee studio construction and	
general supervision	10,000.00
consultations, transportation and	
installation of all elements	7,500.00
documentation	400.00
misc. transportation, telephone,	
bolts etc.	1168.50
sub total	19,818.50

levels

5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 23 25 27 29 31 33 35
4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 length of tubes 5/8 O.D 1/2" I.D



S.B.O.D. total tube length 660

ELBOWS - 132 CORNERS

CENTER TUBE -
 { WATER SOURCE
 TO WALL PIE
 TO FLOOR
 ACROSS WALL
 TO OUT OF DO
 TO OUTDOOR FAN

5.8 O.D. (11x11/2) 242ft

T OR + ATTACHMENT
TO CENTER TUBES -

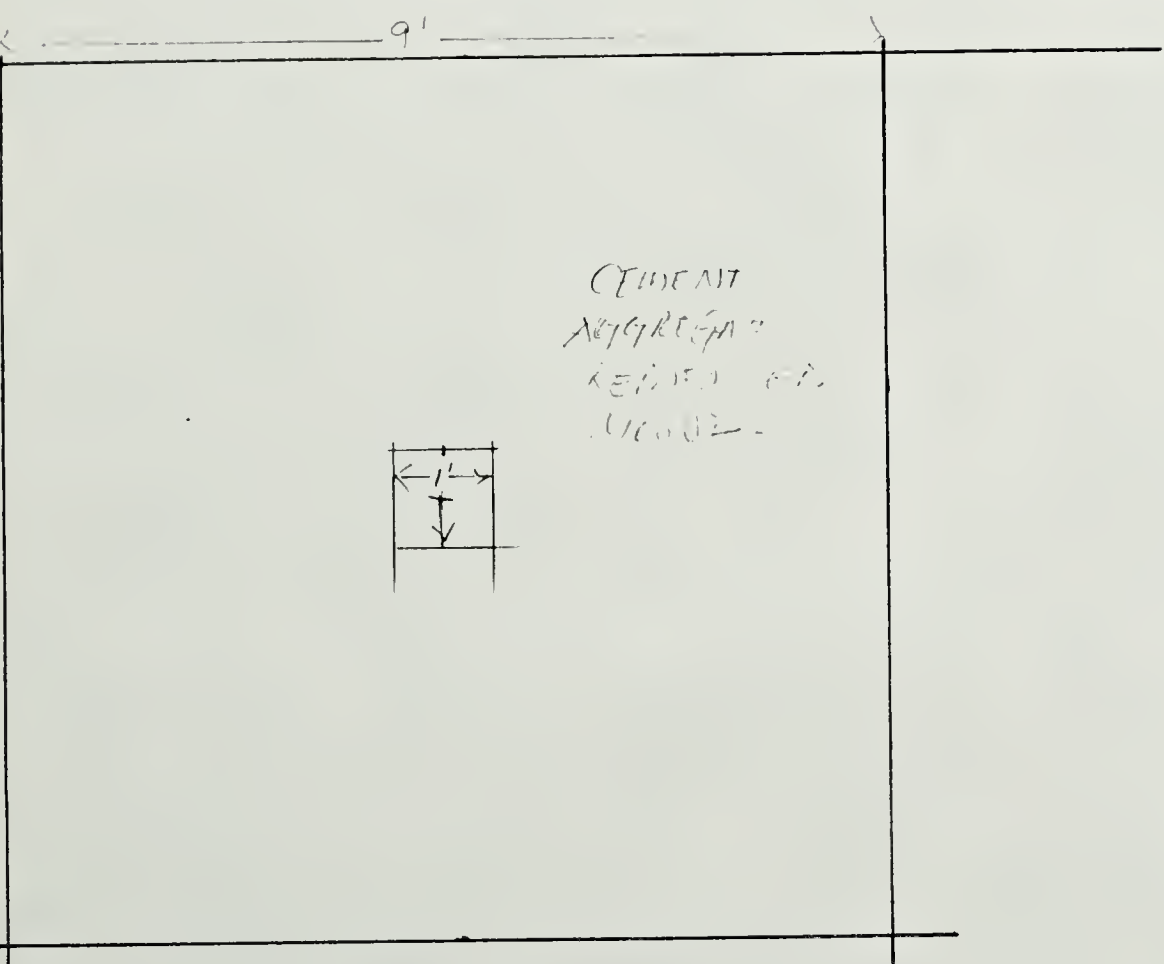
7 66's center wall

BRACKETS TO WALL - 132

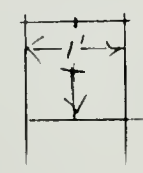
Pipe strap 1/2" copper
Copper, Br

HARDWARE (NAILS etc)
SPLIT ring hanger or BRACKETS [CLEATS] 250
1/2 O.D 54-20 FT LENGTHS
ELBOWS
IN FOLD 1/4 - 54 FT (3-20 FT LENGTHS)
SOLDER (3% SILVER MIXTURE OF
- COPPER / BRONZE / SILVER)
GUM PIPE 1 gal 128.5
WAV
to the ground
Pump
electrical G.F.I.
HOUSING (GROUND FAULT INTERRUPTER)
WATER SOURCE
TO THE TUBES

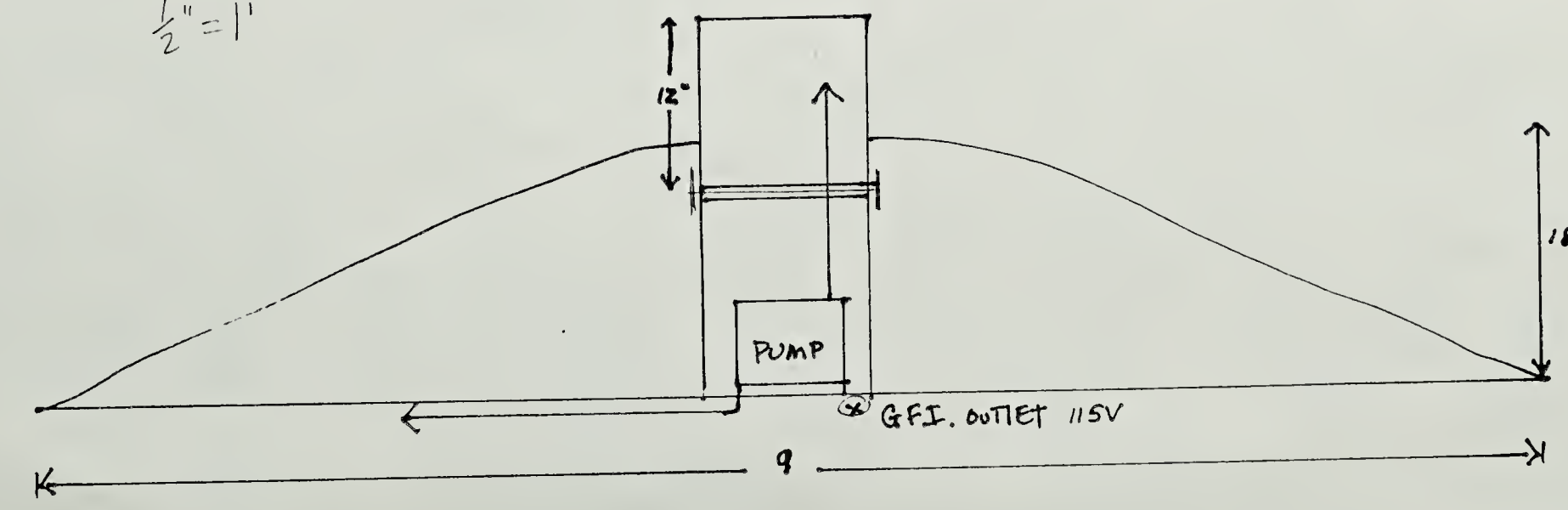
1 1.5 2 2.5 3 3.5 4 4.5 5 5.5 6 6.5 7 7.5 8 8.5 9
1.25 1.75 2.25 2.75 3.25 3.75 4.25 4.75 5.25 5.75 6.25 6.75 7.25 7.75 8.25 8.75



CEMENT
AGGREGATE
REQUIRED FOR
MOUND



$\frac{1}{2}'' = 1'$



CEMENT MOUND
POWDERED COPPER
PIGMENT
AGGREGATE

⊗ GFI. OUTLET 115V

EXTERIOR
"CHARTING AN UNKNOWN
FIELD"